(b) to (d) The Department of Tourism every year prioritises tourism project in consultation with the State Government for providing financial assistance. For the year 1996-97 five projects for the development of tourism in Gujarat have been prioritised, however, the State Government of Madhya Pradesh has not identified any project for Central Financial Assistance. The projects identified in Gujarat for financial assistance dunng 1996-97 are :

(1) Flood lighting of Dwarkadhish Temple at Dwarka; (2) Re-furbishment of monuments, Suntemple at Modhera; (3) Re-furbishment of monument-Step well at Modhera; (4) Public Convenience at Ambaji; and (5) Flood lighting of Lakhota Place, Jamnagar.

(e) and (f) No Sir. Does not arise.

[Translation]

Kurmi Caste

5475. SHRI THOMAS HANSDA : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the people belonging to Kurmi caste of Jharkhand area of Bihar State were under the Scheduled Tribe category prior to 1993;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the style of living; traditions and worship of the Kurmis are similar to that of the other tribes of the above area;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether there has been no social, economic and educational development of the Kurmi caste there;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the Union Government propose to include the Kurmis of Jharkhand area in the list of Scheduled Tribes;

(g) if so, the time by which they are likely to be included in the ST List; and

(h) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) The information is being collected.

(f) to (h) The matter is under the consideration of the Government.

[English]

PCOs in Madhya Pradesh

5476. SHRI VISHVESHWAR BHAGAT : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of PCOs functioning in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) the number of PCOs have been closed during each of the last two years; and

(c) the reasons for their closure ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The total number of local and STD PCOs working in Madhya Pradesh as on 31st July, 1996 is 18185.

(b) Number of PCOs closed during 1994-95 and 1995-96 are 213 and 303 respectively.

(c) 221 PCOs were closed on request from franchisees, 293 due to non-payment and 2 PCOs were closed due to misuse.

Marathi Channel

5477. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Government of Maharashtra has submitted a proposal to the Union Government to start a Marathi channel 'MAI MARATHI' on Doordarshan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) the time by which it is likely to be started ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) and (b) Chief Minister, Maharashtra wrote on 6th April, 1995 requesting Doordarshan to start "Mai Marathi Channel".

(c) and (d) It is the endeavour of Doordarshan to accommodate, as far as possible, the demands of all the language groups. At present, regional programmes in Marathi are telecast by Doordarshan on DD-I from 1630 to 2030 hours (Monday to Friday) and 1630 to 1930 hours on Sundays. In addition, Marathi programmes are also telecast on regional language satellite channel (DD-10), which can be seen in any part of the country through an appropriate dish antenna.

Allotment of STD/PCO Booths to Women

5478. SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the norms for allotment of STD/PCO booths;

(b) the number of STD/PCO booth allotted in Gujarat during each of the last three years, district-wise;

(c) the number out of these allotted to women;

(d) whether there is no provision for allotment of such booths to women; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor and whether the Government propose to include women in the norms/ criteria ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The norms are as follows :—

STD PCOs are allotted to educated unemployed persons. Minimum educational qualification is 8th pass for rural areas, Matric/High School pass for urban areas. Preference is given to the following categories of persons:

(i) Handicapped including blind persons.

(ii) SC/ST applicants.

(iii) Ex-Servicemen/War Widows.

(iv) Retired DOT employees or their dependants.

(v) Dependants of Freedom Fighters.

(vi) Charitable Institutions/Hospitals.

(b) and (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House soon.

(d) Women are equally eligible for allotment of STD PCOs as men.

(e) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

Grants of Loans to OBCs

5479. SHRI VIJAY ANNAJI MUDE : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any corporation has been set up to grant loans to Other Backward Classes for setting up different kinds of industrial, commercial and such other units;

(b) if so, the details of its composition and functions;

(c) the procedure adopted for sanctioning loans; and

(d) the details of loans granted under different heads since its inception, State/Union-Territory-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of India has set-up National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) on 13th January, 1992 under the aegis of Ministry of Welfare to promote economic and developmental activities for the betterment of Backward Classes and to assist the poorer sections of these classes in skill development and self-employment ventures. The authorised and paid-up share capital is Rs. 200 crore and Rs. 156.9 crore respectively.

The Government has constituted a Board of Directors for over-seeing operations of the Corporation. At present there are 7 Directors on the Board of NBCFDC including the Managing Director. The Managing Director of the Corporation is the Chief Executive who oversees the day to day functioning of the Corporation.

The main function of the Corporation is to provide credit facilities to the eligible members of Backward Classes for setting up their self-employment ventures under the Agriculture and Allied; Artisan and Traditional Occupation; Small Business; Small Scale and Tiny Industry and Transport Services sectors.

Additionally, the Corporation's mandate also provides for extending education loans to the Backward Classes for attaining higher professional education and training, grants towards upgradation of technical and entrepreneurial skill of Backward Classes.

Members of Backward Classes living below double poverty line can be given loans by the NBCFDC through the Channelising Agencies.

(c) NBCFDC provides loans through the State BC Corporation/Channelising Agencies nominated by concerned State Govt. For this purpose, a General Loan Agreement (GLA) is entered by NBCFDC with State Channelising Agencies (SCA). The Channelising Agencies are responsible for identification and formulation of technically feasible and financially viable schemes and submit to NBCFDC for financing. Each scheme may cover a number of identical units and each unit can cover a number of beneficiaries. The proposals are processed as per the guidelines issued in this regard from time to time. The Channelising Agencies are required to identify potential beneficiaries, their vocational and training requirements and viable schemes as per felt needs of the identified beneficiaries. NBCFDC examines the viability of the proposals and sanction loans in appropriate cases by issuing Letter of Intent (LOI). The Channelising Agency will further sanction and disburse loans to the identified beneficiaries within stipulated time i.e. within 3 months in case of Term Loan (TL) and within 4 months in case of Margin Money Loan (MML), after release of funds from NBCFDC. The responsibility of ensuring the utilisation of loans by the beneficiaries and recoveries of loans will be that of Channelising Agencies.

The NBCFDC loans are provided at the following rates of interest :

	From SCA	From Beneficiary
Term Loan		
upto Rs. 100000	4.5% p.a.	7% p.a.
above Rs. 100000 upto Rs. 500000	7.5% p.a.	10% p.a.
Transport Sector	10.5% p.a.	12% p.a.
0.5% rebate on timely repayment from the SCA to NBCFDC.		
Margin Money Loan		
upto Rs. 40000	1% p.a	3% p.a.
above Rs. 40000 upto Rs. 200000	3% p.a.	4% p.a.

(d) SCA-wise sanction and disbursement of loan and details of sector-wise distribution of funds since inception to 31.8.96 are given at statements I, II and III respectively.